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RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL PRIORITY 6016  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 2142  
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON PRIORITY 0213  
RUEHCHI/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI PRIORITY 7352  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BANGKOK 003025

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/MLS, NSC FOR WALTON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/29/2019

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SUBJECT: THAILAND: KING'S FRAIL HEALTH FORCES HIM TO OPT  
OUT OF NEARLY ALL BIRTHDAY FESTIVITIES

REF: BANGKOK 2488 (THAILAND: KING BHUMIBOL'S  
HOSPITALIZATION)

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Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission James F. Entwistle, reasons 1.4  
(b) and (d).

#### SUMMARY AND COMMENT

¶1. (C) On November 30, the Office of His Majesty's Principal Private Secretary (PPS) announced that King Bhumibol Adulyadej would not participate in any of the public events scheduled around his December 5 birthday, Thailand's National Day. Though the King has been hospitalized since mid-September (REF A), he has made two public appearances in recent weeks, heightening expectations he might be able to preside over portions of the public celebration. Instead, the most notable traditional public events (Military parade and oath-taking, public audience/annual speech) have been postponed, and Crown Prince Vajiralongkorn assigned to represent the King for three other ceremonies, reinforcing the reality that the Prince is the unquestioned heir apparent to his father. PPS Arsa Sarasin told Ambassador November 29 that the King still planned to grant an audience to the Cabinet, senior judges, and members of parliament on December 15.

¶2. (C) Comment: This latest news will disappoint the King's many loyal subjects, all of whom were presumably looking forward to seeing him back in the public orbit and in better health after the recent extended hospitalization. While the announcement underscores the fragility of the King's condition and will be interpreted by many as symbolically important, there is no evidence to suggest that his health has taken a precipitous turn for the worse. In fact, to the contrary, Arsa told the Ambassador November 29 that palace officials remained optimistic that his health generally remained on the upswing. According to Arsa, the King simply had not yet convalesced to the point that he could withstand the physical demands of participating in the series of public ceremonies/events, particularly the military parade, with its heavy uniform and movements in/out of cars and on the

reviewing stand. Whether the 81-year King -- who suffers from Parkinson's and has now logged over two months in the hospital -- will convalesce to that point remains an open question. End Summary and Comment.

NO BIRTHDAY BASH FOR HIS MAJESTY  
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13. (SBU) The King's Principal Private Secretary's office released a statement on November 30 with the full schedule of official ceremonies slated in honor of King Bhumibol's 82nd birthday on December 5. The statement did not explicitly address the fact that the King would not be able to preside over any of the public events, but noted that several of the events, including the December 2 Military Parade which is normally the highlight of the week-long celebrations, and a royal audience for the general public on December 4, when the King traditionally delivers his annual address, would be "postponed." (note: the 2008 general audience/speech was also "postponed" - and never rescheduled. End note.) The November 30 announcement did note, however, that the King would give a royal audience to members of the royal household, selected government officials and members of parliament at the Ammarinthara Winitchai Palace on the morning of December 5.

14. (SBU) The announcement further clarified that the Crown Prince would act in the King's stead for the remaining three ceremonies/events that had not been postponed. As a result, the Crown Prince will represent his father during the December 5 afternoon birthday ceremony, the merit making ceremony at Ammarinthara Winitchai Palace on December 6, and the December 8 audience for foreign envoys to present their

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well wishes to the King.  
JOHN